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# MUSIC EDUCATION IN IOWA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## **Abstract:**

Our paper discusses the status of music education programs in Iowa public schools. Music programs are often the first to be cut when school districts have financial difficulties. Therefore, we conducted further research on this topic.

Our research includes a short history of music and its importance in education. It is also shown to improve learning and have an effect on the human brain. Throughout the country many schools have dropped or reduced their music programs, mainly due to budget cuts and Common Core requirements.

In order to see how Iowa is doing, we sent out surveys to all 338 public school districts and received 91 responses. Our results showed that in Iowa most school districts have retained their music programs and have found ways to keep music alive for their students. It also showed that Iowans are very proud of their music programs and are willing to support them.

## **Introduction:**

### **Problem statement:**

**In the United States many school districts have cut music education programs. Is this an issue in Iowa, and if so, why? What steps are being taken to mitigate the problem?**

### *Historical Background:*

The existence of music can be seen throughout human history. Every known culture has music. Music is influenced by many aspects from the culture such as economy, social structure, and experiences. Thomas Jefferson played violin to help him write the Declaration of Independence. When he needed help with words for certain parts he would play his violin, as this would help him get his words out onto the paper. Thomas Jefferson said that music “is the favorite passion of my soul, and fortune has cast my lot in a country where it is in a state of deplorable barbarism (Monticello, 1987)”. Thomas Jefferson encouraged music in America as music played an important role in his life.

When Albert Einstein was young, teachers told his parents to take him out of school because he was too stupid to learn. They recommended that Albert get an easy manual job. His parents did not believe that Albert was stupid and they did not follow the school’s recommendations. Instead, they bought Albert a violin. Albert once said one of the reasons why he was so smart was because he played violin. He said, “Life without playing music is inconceivable for me, I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music. I get most joy in life out of music (O’Donnell, 1999)”.

Music became part of the public school curriculum in Boston in the 1830s with the help of singing teacher Lowell Mason. The Boston School Committee decided to add music to the curriculum because they believed music was of a moral, physical, and intellectual nature. At that time they believed music was moral because it played a huge part in religion. It was believed to make people happy, content, cheerful, and peaceful. It also contributes to memory, comparison, attention, and intellectual abilities (Wikipedia, 2011).

Vocal music was common in women's schools. Private academies also offered instruction in instruments such as violin, viola, cello, and piano to both girls and boys (Wikipedia, 2011).

The educator Luther Whiting Mason established music education in Cincinnati by the mid-19th century. Luther Whiting Mason was also known as a prominent author of textbooks. His textbook, *National Music Course* (published in 1870) was adopted as a standard part of the curriculum for many schools. Music education continued to spread across the country and became a respected part of education (Wikipedia, 2011).

## **Why is music important?**

### *Music as a cultural learning tool:*

How do we learn what it is to be an American, Irishman, Botswanan, or Israeli and what is important to us? Music. Music is one method that is used to teach children about their culture. Some cultures such as the Navajo have very strong oral traditions and have songs about creation

that tell their important stories. They also use songs to teach the children cultural values including respect for their elders. Music is used during important milestones in life, for example, the puberty ceremony for girls.

Patriotic songs are another way to honor the society's culture. There are many examples of patriotic songs such as "God Bless the USA" by Lee Greenwood, "I am Australian" by Bruce Woodley, and "Prayer for Ukraine" by Oleksandr Konysky (Wikipedia, 2014). Almost every country on Earth has a national anthem. The anthems are one clue as to what is important to that culture.

Some anthems honor their leader (The United Kingdom)

God save our gracious Queen,  
Long live our noble Queen,  
God save the Queen:  
Send her victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us:  
God save the Queen. (Flagdom)

Some extol the beauty of their land (Seychelles)

Seychelles our only motherland  
Where we live in harmony  
Happiness, love and peace  
We give thanks to God.  
  
Preserve the beauty of our country  
The riches of our oceans  
A precious heritage  
For the happiness of our children.  
  
Live forever in unity  
Raise our flag  
Together for all eternity  
Join together all Seychellois. (Flagdom)

Some are militaristic (Algeria)

We swear by the lightning that destroys,  
By the streams of generous blood being shed,  
By the bright flags that wave,  
Flying proudly on the high mountains,  
That we have risen up, and whether we live or die,  
We are resolved that Algeria shall live -  
So be our witness -be our witness - be our witness!

We are soldiers in revolt for truth  
And we have fought for our independence.  
When we spoke, none listened to us,  
So we have taken the noise of gunpowder as our rhythm  
And the sound of machine guns as our melody,  
We are resolved that Algeria shall live -  
So be our witness -be our witness -be our witness!

O France, the time of reproof is over  
And we have ended it as a book is ended;  
O France, this is the day of reckoning  
So prepare to receive from us our answer!  
In our revolution is the end of empty talk;  
We are resolved that Algeria shall live -  
So be our witness -be our witness -be our witness! (Flagdom)

Finally, music can be a way to connect to a language or birth culture. Parents who are immigrants might use songs to help their children grow up bilingual or at least to keep some type of connection with the parents' country of origin. Music can help almost anyone who is learning a new language.

### *Music as an academic learning tool:*

Music is a highly effective learning tool or mnemonic device that can be used by people of any age. You can set almost any piece of information that you want to remember to music. Learning songs are used at home, in church, and at school. What follows are a very small sample of songs that teach and help you remember.

For most people, our first experience with learning songs happens at home. One of the first learning songs that anyone born in the US learns is the ABCs. The theme from the Addams Family can be used to teach children the days of the week. Similarly, the months of the year can be learned to the Macarena.

For people growing up in a Judeo-Christian faith, learning the names of the 12 Disciples is an important task. If you were exposed to one or more versions of the 12 Disciples song you would know that they are: Simon-Peter, Andrew, James, his brother John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon, Judas, and Bartholomew! Bible stories have been set to song such as “How did Moses cross the Red Sea?” and “Jesus Loves Me”. No doubt other religions have similar learning songs.

Schools also use songs as learning tools. An example from elementary school is “Fifty Nifty United States.” Most Americans have likely heard or performed this song at a school recital. Another example is the Billy Joel song “We Didn’t Start the Fire.” This song was written in 1989 and features over 100 headlines from most of the years of Billy Joel’s lifetime up to that point. Schools used this popular, current song as a springboard for lessons. By researching the items mentioned in the song, students were learning current history. Here are two years of headlines as listed in the song:

## 1956

- [Brigitte Bardot](#): appears in her first mainstream film *And God Created Woman* and establishes an international reputation as a French "sex kitten".
- [Budapest](#): is the capital city of Hungary and site of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.
- [Alabama](#): is the site of the Montgomery Bus Boycott which ultimately led to the removal of the last race laws in the USA. Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr figure prominently.
- [Nikita Khrushchev](#): makes his famous Secret Speech denouncing Stalin's "cult of personality" on February 25.

- [Princess Grace Kelly](#): releases her last film, *High Society*, and marries Prince Rainier III of Monaco.
- [Peyton Place](#): the best-selling novel by Grace Metalious, is published. Though mild compared to today's prime time, it shocked the reserved values of the 1950s.
- [Trouble in the Suez](#): The Suez Crisis boils as Egypt nationalizes the Suez Canal on October 29 (Wikipedia, 2015).

## 1983

- [Wheel of Fortune](#): A hit television game show which has been TV's highest-rated syndicated program since 1983.
- [Sally Ride](#): On June 18, she became the first American woman in space by flying aboard *Challenger* on the STS-7 shuttle mission. Ride's quip from space "Better than an E-ticket", harkens back to the opening of Disneyland mentioned earlier, with the E-ticket purchase needed for the best rides.
- [Heavy metal suicide](#): In the 1980s Ozzy Osbourne and the bands Judas Priest and Metallica were brought to court by parents who accused the musicians of hiding subliminal pro-suicide messages in their music.
- [Foreign debts](#): Persistent U.S. trade and budget deficits
- [Homeless vets](#): Veterans of the Vietnam War, including many disabled ex-military, are reported to be left homeless and impoverished.
- [AIDS](#): A collection of symptoms and infections in humans resulting from the specific damage to the immune system caused by infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). It is first detected and recognized in the 1980s, and was on its way to becoming a pandemic.
- [Crack cocaine](#): use surged in the mid-to-late 1980s (Wikipedia, 2015).

Perhaps the most famous set of learning songs is Schoolhouse Rock! Schoolhouse Rock is a series of 3 minute animated songs (“episodes”) that were broadcasted during ABC Saturday morning cartoons. Each episode covered a different category such as multiplication “Three is a Magic Number”; grammar “Conjunction Junction”; science “Interplanet Janet”; America “I’m Just a Bill”; Money “Tyrannosaurus Debt”; or Earth “The Trash Can Band”. There was also a four episode series in the early 1980s about computers but they became outdated very quickly and weren’t broadcast after 1985 (Wikipedia, 2015).

The idea for Schoolhouse Rock was born when advertising executive, David McCall noticed that his son was having trouble learning the multiplication tables, yet knew the lyrics to many



popular songs by heart. That made him think that the multiplication table could be set to music. Mr. McCall told his idea to his fellow advertising executives, Tom Yohe and George Newall. They ended up asking jazz musician, Bob Dorough to write a math song. He came up with “Three is a Magic Number” which was recorded and tested in several school districts with great results. The idea was to create a phonograph record of several educational songs, however, “Three is a Magic Number” had such visual lyrics that they decided to make an education film instead. They showed it to Michael Eisner at ABC and the series moved to TV (Yohe and Newall, 1996).

The success of Multiplication Rock led to the development of other series and allowed additional writers to develop their talent, including Lynn Ahrens (who started out as a secretary in the copy department at the advertising agency). Lynn wrote a total of 16 of the Schoolhouse rock songs. The America Rock series was created in the mid-1970s in conjunction with the Bicentennial. Lynn wrote “the winner for the most-hummed-during-history-tests” episode, “The Preamble” about the Preamble to the Constitution. (Yohe and Newall, 1996).

There were 64 episodes created altogether with a majority of the episodes (37) being created between 1972 and 1979. The series premiered on January 13, 1973 and was broadcast until 1985. It was revived from 1993 – 1999, utilizing the original as well as new episodes. There were additional episodes created in the 2000s, most of which were released directly to DVD in 2009 and there is even a live stage version of Schoolhouse Rock! (Wikipedia, 2015).

The introduction to each episode says it all:

“As your body grows bigger  
Your mind must flower  
It’s great to learn  
‘Cause knowledge is power...” (TV Uber, 2013)

To show the long-lasting influence of Schoolhouse rock, there was a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration at the Kennedy Center in January 2013. At the celebration more than a thousand people attended hear Bob Dorough sing some of the songs. They came to remember their childhoods as well as introduce their kids to the songs. In addition to the songs being available on VHS, CD, and DVD more than 30 million people have seen episodes on YouTube (Bohn, 2013).

Again, these were just a very small sample of how music can be used as a learning tool. Some of these songs are timeless because they teach things that each and every generation must know.

### **Music's effect on the body:**

#### *Music's effect on the body in general:*

Music influences us in many ways and the effects can be instant and long lasting. Music connects physical, emotional and spiritual elements. It can be used to change your mood or to strengthen or weaken emotions. Each of us responds and perceives music in our own unique way based on our knowledge of music, experience, culture, and emotions.

Music causes the heart beat and pulse rate to tune into the beat of the music. Music can relax the body, making it more alert and easier for the mind to concentrate. Music also decreases blood pressure, increases the ability to learn, and affects the amplitude and frequency of brain

waves. Music can also affect a person's breathing rate. More intense music, on the other hand, can cause the pupils to dilate, increase blood pressure and heart rate depending on our own experience.

Music has been shown to have positive effects on the body in several ways. It helps with pain management to reduce headaches and migraines as well as post-operative and post-childbirth pain. It can also help in recovering from a stroke. By reducing the stress hormone cortisol, music can help boost the body's immunity. Many hospitals use music therapy to aid in patient recovery. Other studies have shown that music can help improve athletic performance or fight depression and insomnia (eMedExpert, 2009).

There have been many research studies over the years looking at the effect of music on our bodies. Most of the research done on music until 1970 was on the effect of the beat of the music. These researchers discovered that slow music decreases the heartbeat, the breathing rate, and the blood pressure, while the fast music increases the heartbeat, the breathing rate, and the blood pressure.

The Lamb and Gregory study (1993) revealed a strong relationship between pitch and discrimination and phonemic awareness in preschool children. They proposed that "carefully structured musical training should be an essential component of the primary curriculum" (Chipongian, 2000).

Many other research studies have found that kids who participated in music tend to score higher on tests of reading comprehension than children who do not participate in music. Johnson and Memmott (2006) revealed a strong relationship between academic achievement and

participation in high quality music programs. Butzlaff (2000) also found a strong and reliable relationship between music instruction and test scores on reading.

Many teachers and parents believe that music can engage and encourage children. The National Coalition for Music Education reports that less than one-third of high school students are taking music classes compared to fifty years ago. Some of these cuts are due to the school budget cuts resulting in a lack of money to support music in their curriculum. Some school districts might consider music a “curricular frill”, which makes it vulnerable, and can be one of the first and easiest subjects to let go (Chipongian, 2000).

### *Music's effect on the brain:*

Many claims have been made by scientists and music professionals stating music affects how the brain functions and is, in turn, related to high performance in reading, math problem solving skills, and increased test scores. It has been found that there is a difference in the level of brain activity while playing music as opposed to listening to music. And also the brain responds differently when individuals like and don't like music.

The brain is a very complicated structure and it is difficult to understand how it functions. First, we will look at the basic anatomy of the brain. The brain is divided into two hemispheres; the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere. Each hemisphere controls the opposite side of the body. They are responsible for specific functions as well. For example, the right hemisphere controls creativity, spatial ability, and artistic and musical skills. The left hemisphere, which is dominant in most people, controls writing, comprehension, and language development. These two hemispheres communicate with each other through a bundle of fibers called corpus callosum

(Brain Anatomy, 2013). Each hemisphere is further divided into lobes via special fissures. They are the frontal, parietal, occipital, and temporal lobes. Each lobe has specific areas to control specific functions, and each lobe interacts with other lobes via several bundles of fibers. The functions of each lobe are as follows: **(Figure 1)**

1. The Frontal lobe is responsible for
  - a- personality, behavior, emotions
  - b- Judgment, planning, problem solving
  - c- Speaking and writing (broca's area)
  - d- Intelligence, concentration, self-awareness
2. The Parietal lobe is responsible for
  - a- Interpreting language
  - b- Sense of touch, pain, temperature (sensory strip)
  - c- Interpreting signals from vision, hearing, motor, sensory and memory
  - d- Spatial and visual perception
3. The Occipital lobe is responsible for vision (color, light, movement) interpretation
4. The Temporal lobe is responsible for
  - a- Understanding language (wernicke's area)
  - b- Memory
  - c- Hearing
  - d- Sequencing and organization.

As shown in **Figure 2: The parts of the brain** - playing music affects different parts of brain in the following ways:

- The visual cortex (which is in the occipital lobe) helps to read the musical notes and also to see ones dance moves.
- The auditory cortex (which is very near to temporal lobe) helps to listen, perceive and analyze the tones.
- The sensory cortex helps by sending sensory feedback while playing the instrument and or dancing.

- The motor cortex helps with movement while playing instrument and dancing.
- The prefrontal cortex helps in behavior control expression and decision making,
- The nucleus accumbens and amygdala help to establish an emotional relationship with music.
- The hippocampus is involved in music memories, experiences, and context.
- The Corpus callosum is involved with exchange of information from one hemisphere to other.

Research studies have been done to know how the activation of these specific areas helps with individual's improvement in spatial recognition, math, reading, and performance in schools.

Research done in 1993, popularized the concept of “the Mozart effect”. A group of college students who had listened to Mozart ten minutes prior to the test was compared to the other two groups of college students, one of them heard mixed music and other in a complete silence. According to the authors Frances Rauscher, Gordon Shaw, and Catherine Ky, listening to Mozart increased spatial recognition in the first group temporarily (Rauscher, Shaw, and Ky, 1993).

In January, 1998, Zell Miller, the governor of Georgia, asked for money to be set aside from state funding to send CDs of classical music to all newborns. But as we correlate the result of the research and its outcome, some where it doesn't make any sense, as the research was done on college students and the interpretation was focused on newborn to infant kids (Hammond, 2013).

In 2006 a large research study was done with eight thousand children participating. The children were divided into three groups. The first group listened to Mozart music, the second group listened to popular music, and the third group had a discussion about the experiment prior to the two spatial tests (square completion and paper folding). Once again, children who listened to music did well in the square completion test; but children who listened to popular music did well in the paper folding test. This experiment not only tells us how music effects the children's performance but also enlightens us that the music which is liked by children leaves a positive effect on their ability to perform spatial recognition tasks (Schellenberg and Hallam).

Neuropsychologist Nadine Gaab, from Boston Children's Hospital, performed a research study (aka the "Neigh-Froggy" test) on children; some who were trained in music and some who had never been exposed to music. The children were asked to press the left button when they heard a horse sound along with a picture of a triangle and the right button when they saw a circle. The rules changed if they heard the frog instead of the horse. The children were monitored via functional MRI during the experiment (**Figure 3**). The purpose of the experiment was to see the difference between the executive functioning skill levels between musically trained and musically untrained children. Gaab questions that "could it be possible that the musical training trains executive functioning skills, which in turn helps with academic skills?" Gaab concludes her research by stating music learning improves the executive function skills of the children, probably because playing an instrument in an orchestra involves an interrelation of the auditory system, motor system and executive function system (Hicks, 2014).

Neuroplasticity or brain plasticity is the term used to describe the changes that take place in the functioning of the brain due to new learned behavior (Wikipedia, 2015). According to the

article published in *Annals of the New York academy of Sciences*, the authors described research done on 31 children from age 5 to 7 years who were divided into 3 groups based on their music practicing schedules; namely “high practicing”, “low practicing”, and “control group”. The baseline activity of the corpus callosum of the kids in all three groups were found to be the same. This research was conducted for 29 months and at the end of the research the authors found changes in the corpus callosum of the kids who were in the “high practicing” group (**Figure 4**). Based on this experiment the authors concluded that neuroplasticity, which occurred due to “intense musical experience/practice, is responsible for larger anterior corpus callosum area found in professional adult musician.” ( Schlaug et al, 2009)

Psychologist and author of *Music, Language and the Brain* Anirudh D. Patel has a different take on listening to music. He says, “Listening to music can be relaxing and contemplative, the idea that simply plugging in your iPod is going to make you intelligent doesn’t hold up to scientific scrutiny.” He further states that, “Learning to play musical instruments has impact on other abilities like speech perception, the ability to understand emotions in the voice and the ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously.” (Hicks, 2014).

## **Music education program cuts:**

### *Budget cuts:*

There are several reasons why music programs are being cut from school district curricula. The main reasons which we have identified are: budget cuts, Common Core, scheduling issues, and not enough qualified staff. The most frequent reason stems from budget



cuts. School district appropriations and supplemental school aid are set by the state legislature. Legislative cuts to these funds or decreasing enrollment can force school districts to cut or reduce programs. Unfortunately, one of the first programs that are dropped through budget cuts are often music programs. Due to budget cuts around the nation, there have been many music teachers that have been let go. In Chicago, out of a total of 1,581 teachers that have been laid off, 159 of those were in the art or music department. Layoffs have also been seen in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. (Fang, 2013).

To get a student perspective on the effect of budget cuts the teen newspaper *L.A. Youth* surveyed students and received more than 1,850 responses. The top three items which the students thought should be cut were newspaper or broadcast outlets, summer school, and field trips. The survey looked at what students have had to pay for in the past two years at their school. Some of the fees included sports uniforms, art class supplies, buses for field trips, sports team participation, music programs, and lab fees for science classes. The survey also included how the budget cuts were effecting the classroom atmosphere and if there were enough supplies for all of the students. The survey results show that there were lack of necessary supplies such as desks, books, and computers (Zhao, 2012).

### *Common Core:*

Common Core has also caused some of the school districts to drop music. What is the Common Core? It establishes a national standard in Language Arts and Math. It outlines what students in each grade from Kindergarten through 12 should know at the end of each grade. In Iowa, the Iowa Core was adopted in 2008 and is a set of concepts and skills that all students must learn. These concepts are: (1) Literacy; (2) Math; (3) Science; (4) Social Studies; and (5) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The critical skills are: (1) critical thinking; (2) effective communication; (3)

creativity; (4) collaboration; (5) flexibility and adaptability; and (6) productivity and accountability (Iowa Core, 2015). Several schools across the country are unable to focus on music classes for schools because they have concentrated their interest on the Common Core curriculum. Because the common core does not include music it is something that is getting cut from schools. More and more focus is being put on Math and Language arts because of No Child Left Behind and all of the standardized testing which students must undergo. Seeing an increase in test scores is a requirement of schools in order to receive funding. The Common Core requirements combined with the budget cuts lead to a narrow focus on only math and English.

### *Scheduling issues:*

Scheduling issues may also contribute to the dropping of music programs throughout schools. Band or choir might only be given at certain periods, however, this may conflict with an AP class or other class that the student wants to take. This leads to the student having to make a choice in between music or another class. This may lead to students dropping music (Sletto, 2015).

### *Lack of qualified staff:*

The lack of staff also contributes to the cutting of music programs. The budget cuts caused some school districts to lay off teachers, and some of these teachers were music teachers. The increase in budget cuts have resulted in an increase in class size. However, there is a lot of research on how increased class size can cause a detrimental effect on a child's learning. With budget cuts, this means that they try and cut non-teaching positions first. Special programs and staff for these programs are often the first to be cut. Due to the staff cuts or attrition, music

teachers may be given extra duties or the music positions might be combined. For example, the band teacher could also be given the duties of choir director as well. Their teaching license may allow for this consolidation but that doesn't always mean they are the most qualified for the job (Sletto, 2015).

### *Program cuts in Iowa:*

Just like in several other states, some school districts in Iowa have had to make painful decisions regarding their music programs. One example is the Iowa City Community School District. In 2014 the district needed to cut \$3.6 million from their 2015 fiscal year budget. Part of those cuts affected the music program. They cut part (but not all) of the program. The students now have to wait until 5th grade to start orchestra instead of 4<sup>th</sup> grade. They also increased the class size. The general music courses for Junior high school students were dropped, although band, orchestra and chorus remained. According to the article in *The Gazette*, at the School Board meeting in 2014 when these cuts were being discussed “the changes to the music programs got the most attention from the crowd of a few dozen people in attendance.” The article also quotes Mara Goodvin, the president of the Iowa City Music Auxiliary “ ‘Cutting a year from the orchestra program is not a budget adjustment’ she said, using the term administrators applied to the process. ‘Rather, it is devastation.’ ” (Hennigan, 2014).

Another example of an Iowa school district which may have to make changes to their music program is the Clear Lake School District. The district will be making changes to their French and music programs in order to offset a \$500,000 budget deficit. It is anticipated that the

music change will be the choir director position moving from full-time to part-time status (Hunker, 2015).

The Des Moines School District isn't cutting music program at this time but there have been cuts in the past. In 2010 the school district had to make district-wide cuts and they are still recovering from those cuts (Morain, 2014). The school district had a \$33 million budget shortfall for the 2010-11 school year and sent notices to 300 teachers including all art, music, and PE teachers that their positions would not be available. These weren't actually considered layoffs because the teachers' names were put into a pool for available positions within the district. The eliminations were done as a worst-case scenario and it was anticipated that at least some of the positions would be restored (KCCI, 2010).

The budget issue that is a major concern to all Iowa public schools right now is that the Iowa Legislature hasn't approved the appropriations for the 2016 and 2017 school years yet. This is a major issue because by law the school districts had to have their budgets certified by April 15<sup>th</sup>. The fight in the Legislature is over increased supplemental aid to schools. The Democrats want to set the increase at 4% for each of the two years, but the Republicans want 1.25% for 2016 and 2.45% for 2017 (Lee, 2015). The legislative fight is continuing and it is unclear at this point what effect this will have on Iowa's music programs.

### **Current status of music programs in Iowa:**

*Results of the Iowa Music Education Survey 2015:*

The Iowa Music Education Survey 2015 was sent out to 338 public school districts on March 9th, 2015. The recipients were asked to respond by March 20th. The surveys were completely voluntary and responses kept confidential. The survey was created on SurveyMonkey and were sent out to the public school district's emails listed in the Iowa department of Education's directory. We received 91 responses which was a 27% response rate. There were 9 addresses that came back as undeliverable. The survey comprised of 23 questions about the demographics of the school, the different types of music programs, if programs had been cut, and how they were saved from being cut.

The first several questions on the survey were asking about the demographics of the school. Of the schools that responded, there was a good mix of districts with regard to student populations. There are 19.7% of school districts with a smaller student population from 0 to 499; 41.86% of the schools had a student population between 500 and 999; and 38.37% of schools had student populations over 1000. This information was gathered through question 4 and the recorded responses are attached as **Figure 5**. When asked about the student population, 43.3% of schools replied that they saw a decreasing student population and only 23.3% of schools saw an increasing student population. The majority of schools had a stable student population (**Figure 6**).

The schools were also asked about their instrumental, vocal, and classroom music programs. A majority of schools had an instrumental music program in elementary schools, there are 77.91% of schools responded that they had an instrumental music program. About 97% of districts replied saying they had an instrumental music program for the middle and high school programs (**Table 1**). A lot of schools also had a vocal music program. 85% of districts had a

vocal music program in their elementary schools and increased to around 97% for the middle and high school districts (**Table 2**). Interestingly, there were fewer schools with classroom music programs. In elementary schools, 57% of districts had a classroom music program. In middle schools, only 34.9% of districts had a classroom music program. In high schools, there were 29.6%, of districts that had classroom music programs (**Table 3**).

Many of the schools required certain music programs. For classroom music, there was a lower percentage of schools that offered classroom music at the higher school levels. 49.44% of elementary schools required classroom music and 12.05% of middle schools required it. High schools did not require classroom music (**Table 3**). However, very few schools required the instrumental music program at schools. Elementary schools required instrumental music in 12.79% of schools. In middle schools, it decreased to 6.67% and for high schools, only 2.25% of schools required it (**Table 1**). This was different for the vocal music program. The vocal music program was required in 65.91% of elementary schools and still required in 25% of middle schools (**Table 2**). For the optional programs, there were more than 10% of the student population that participated in the instrumental music program and on average about 26-50% of students participated in the vocal music and classroom music program. The majority of these programs have been around for longer than 10 years. These programs were rarely dropped in the past.

Of the schools districts that dropped programs, they listed some reasons as budget cuts and lack of funding, the increasing focus on Common Core requirements. Some other reasons that were noted was that some schools share music programs with other districts and had to reduce the number of instructors. One of the schools are no longer able to have music twice a

day in the elementary schools because of their schools in needs of assistance school status. Of the 8 respondents, 62.5% replied saying that budget cuts or lack of funding was a reason that the music program was dropped. The other 25% of respondents said that the programs were dropped because the district was focusing on Common Core requirements (**Figure 7**).

The music programs that were most commonly dropped were the elementary instrumental and classroom programs, along with the middle school vocal and classroom programs. The reasons that the music programs were not dropped had many different answers. 25% of districts said that parents and guardians protested the cut. The other 25% of districts answered that the faculty protested the program cut, another 25% stated that a new source of funding was secured. Additional comments stated that the administration recognized the value of music and that there was a lot of student participation. A lot of districts have their own way of raising funds for the music program. A majority of these funds come from music booster clubs, donations, and grants. 93.26% of respondents have a booster club for parents or guardians to participate. Of the 90 schools that responded, lack of student participation and lack of staff was not a reason the music programs were dropped in the schools.

### *Limitations:*

Some ways in which we could have improved this study is to ask more questions on the survey. There should be more questions that had the participants answer questions on a Likert scale. One limitation is that the amount of schools that have dropped music seems to be very low and that is the focus of our survey.

Another way to reduce some confusion would be to clarify what instrumental, vocal, and classroom music was. The person responding to the survey may not know exactly how each are different and this may skew our results. Also, there may be response bias. These surveys were sent out to the emails that were associated with the Iowa Board of Education's directory. This could mean that anyone may have been replying to the survey.

## **What are people doing to mitigate the problem?**

### *Fine Arts Advocacy – STEM to STEAM:*

Because the United States is behind other parts of the world in subjects such as math and science, our schools including those in Iowa, are emphasizing the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) courses. Fine arts advocates are not proposing to drop the emphasis on STEM. What they want is to change the emphasis from STEM to STEAM by including arts in the curriculum emphasis.

Iowa has very strong leadership in Fine Arts education. Perhaps the strongest organization is The Iowa Alliance for Arts Education (IAAE). The IAAE is a 501(c)(3) organization that is dedicated to supporting arts education in Iowa. Their vision "increases awareness, recognition and support of policies, practices, and partnerships that ensure quality sequential arts education programs for all Iowa students" (Iowa Alliance, 2015). One of the IAAE's activities is to lobby the Iowa State Legislature. They sponsored the second annual Fine Arts Advocacy Day at the State Capitol on January 28, 2015. "The purpose of the day is to advocate for Fine Arts instruction in Iowa schools and to ask for legislative support to add Fine



Arts to the Iowa Core” (Iowa Music Educators Association, 2014). The following organizations are separate from IAAE but they support each other and music advocacy: Iowa Bandmasters Association; Iowa Choral Director Association; Iowa Music Educators Association; and Iowa String Teachers Association.

### *Current Legislation:*

HR271 is a bill that is currently in the Education Committee of the Iowa Legislature. This bill would add fine arts to the Iowa Core Curriculum. The bill was introduced on February 17, 2015 and on February 19<sup>th</sup>, passed its subcommittee.

### **House File 271 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE 271  
BY FORRISTALL and GAINES

### **A BILL FOR**

An Act relating to required core curriculum and twenty-first century learning skills addressed in rules adopted by the state board of education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

Section 1. Section 256.7, subsection 26, paragraph a, 1 subparagraph (3), Code 2015, is amended to read as follows: (3) The rules establishing a core curriculum shall address the core content standards in subsection 28 and the skills and knowledge students need to be successful in the twenty-first century and shall address the curricular needs of students in kindergarten through grade twelve in those areas. The core curriculum shall include ~~social studies and~~ twenty-first century learning skills which shall include but are not limited to the following:

(a) Social studies, civic literacy, health literacy, technology literacy, financial literacy, and employability skills; ~~and shall address the curricular needs of students in kindergarten through grade twelve in those areas. The state board shall further define the twenty-first century learning skills components by rule.~~

(b) Music, visual art, drama and theater, and other fine and applied arts. The department shall employ a consultant to oversee the development of and compliance with the fine arts core curriculum and to provide guidance for professional development programs, strategies, and materials based on the rules adopted by the state board pursuant to this subparagraph division.

Sec. 2. STATE MANDATE FUNDING SPECIFIED. In accordance with Code section 25B.2, subsection 3, the state cost of requiring compliance with any state mandate included in this Act shall be paid by a school district from state school foundation aid received by the school district under Code section 257.16. This specification of the payment of the state cost shall be deemed to meet all of the state funding-related requirements of Code section 25B.2, subsection 3, and no additional state funding shall be necessary for the full implementation of this Act by and enforcement of this Act against all affected school districts.

#### EXPLANATION

**The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.**

This bill modifies the required core curriculum and twenty-first century learning skills and knowledge that the state board of education is required to address in rule. Currently, the required core curriculum includes English or language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies; and the necessary twenty-first century learning skills include but are not limited to civic literacy, health literacy, technology literacy, financial literacy, and employability skills. The bill requires that such core curriculum and twenty-first century learning skills include music, visual art, drama and theater, and other fine and applied arts. The bill also requires the department of education to employ a consultant to oversee the development of and compliance with the fine arts core curriculum and to provide guidance for professional development programs, strategies, and materials based on the rules relating to the fine arts core curriculum and the twenty-first century fine arts learning skills adopted by the state board. The bill may include a state mandate as defined in Code 21 section 25B.3. The bill requires that the state cost of any state mandate included in the bill be paid by a school district from state school foundation aid received by the school district under Code section 257.16. The specification is deemed to constitute state compliance with any state mandate funding-related requirements of Code section 25B.2. The inclusion of this specification is intended to reinstate the requirement of political subdivisions to comply with any state mandates included in the bill.

The problem with this bill in our opinion is that it doesn't provide any additional funding.

The Department of Education would be hiring the consultant, but the school districts would have to absorb the cost as well as the costs if they implement any of the consultant's

recommendations. It doesn't appear that this bill will move any further in the Legislature.

According to the bill's co-sponsor, Ruth Ann Gaines, "I do not believe that the bill will pass the House because the House Chair of the Education Committee does not plan to present it to the Committee for a vote" (Gaines, 2015). The reason that the Chairman might not proceed with HR271 is the same reason that previous efforts have failed in that he thinks "any change to the

Iowa Core should be handled by the State Board of Education” (Lucey, 2014). As of April 10<sup>th</sup> there has not been any further action on the bill.

### *Going through “the back door”:*

Iowa is a leader in going through “the back door” to help protect music’s place in the curriculum. The Iowa Core was adopted in 2008 and sets learning goals in five subject areas: literacy, math, science, social studies, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. At first glance you might not think so, but music fulfills part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century core requirements. A group of music educators (including Professor Thomas Sletto from Drake) created a “General Music K-8 alignment with Iowa Core” proposal to show how music can fulfill the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Constructs. The following is an example from the 3-5<sup>th</sup> grade level:

Uses song, speech, and movement to effectively communicate, collaborate with a group and produce a musical product. (These fulfill the effective communication, collaboration, creativity, productivity/accountability skills)

Recognizes and respects the commonality and diversity among the cultures and histories of the world through musical experiences. (This fulfills effective communication, and flexibility/adaptability skills.) (Iowa Alliance, 2012)

## **“Non-Traditional” Sources of Funding:**

### *Grants:*

In today’s uncertain world diversification is a key to survival. Securing supplemental funds can make the difference if the music program survives or thrives. The following are two

Iowa examples of “non-traditional” sources of funding that school districts might be able to utilize to help cover gaps in budgeting for music programs:

Iowa Arts Council – this non-profit is more visual arts than music oriented, but their Big Yellow School Bus grant provides \$500 for a field trip or to bring an artist into the classroom for Pre-K through grade 12 students. “Eligible types of arts events include visual art exhibits or music, dance or theatre performances.” (Iowa Arts Council, 2013).

The Connecting Kids and Culture program helps fund transportation to cultural events and bring cultural events to the classroom for grades Kindergarten through fifth grade in Dallas, Polk, and Warren Counties. Part of their funding comes from the Principal Charity Classic golf tournament with the grant being facilitated through the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines (Connecting Kids and Culture).

### *“Star Endorsed” Issue:*

Like many other issues or problems, East and West coast school districts appear to be more affected by cuts in music education than districts in the Midwest (Chicago being an exception). Whether it is because many music stars are located in New York City or Los Angeles, or other reasons, cutting music education has captured some superstar attention. There are two “famous” non-profit organizations with music education as their central focus – the VH1 Save the Music Foundation and Music Unites.

The VH1 Save the Music Foundation’s mission is “a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring music programs in America’s public schools, and raising awareness about the importance of music as part of each child’s complete education.” The program provides grants (around \$30,000 per district) for public elementary and middle schools to create an

instrumental program from scratch. The work at the school district level to identify schools in need and the application is by invitation only. According to their website, “The foundation has donated \$51 million worth of new musical instruments to 1,900 public schools in 192 school districts around the country, impacting the lives of 2.3 million public school students.” The Foundation’s celebrity ambassadors have included music stars such as Britney Spears, Leann Rimes, Mariah Carey, Katy Perry, John Legend, and Beyonce (VH1 Save the Music Foundation, 2013).

“Music Unites is the leading non-profit charity organization supporting music education around the world. Music Unites partners with music stars, celebrity ambassadors and music sponsors to promote music projects and events at local schools – educating kids through music... Music Unites features workshops with ambassadors such as Swizz Beats, John Forte, Sting, Gary Clark Jr., and more” (Music Unites, 2014).

### *Partnerships with business/non-profits:*

Part of the reason that the Des Moines Public School District has been able to recover from their previous budget cuts is the partnerships that they have been able to create in order to enable their students to experience fine arts. The current superintendent, Dr. Tom Ahart has made the arts a priority since he stepped into the job in 2013. Some examples of these partnerships include: the Civic Music Association, which arranges for school visits from musicians that are performing in the CMA performance series; the Metro Arts Alliance, which also arranges school visits from touring musicians; and Des Moines Performing Arts, when they lowered ticket prices to matinees at the Civic Center the sales exploded (Morain, 2014).

## **Conclusions and recommendations:**

### *Conclusions:*

Based on the responses to our survey, Iowa does not have a major problem with music education being dropped at this time. Our survey was sent out to 338 public school districts, and we received 91 responses. A majority of the school are requiring certain music programs, and they have been around for longer than 10 years. Music programs are rarely dropped in Iowa public schools; 97% of our responses said they had an instrumental and vocal music programs for the middle and high school programs and 85% had a vocal music program in their elementary schools. Some of the reasons that music was dropped in the rest of public schools were due to budget cuts, lack of funding and increasing focus on Common Core requirements. The districts that had to make cuts also had a decreasing population in their regions and those are much smaller schools in rural area.

Through the survey, we realized that Iowa public school administrations see that music education is highly valued. Very few schools in Iowa have dropped their music program. Only 4 out of the 89 schools that responded to this question have dropped their music program. Several of the schools commented that the administration recognized the value of music. School X stated that one of the reasons why music programs were kept in the curriculum was because of “administrative recognition of the value of music”. School Y even stated, “it was apparent that our students would not be afforded the same opportunities if the program was dropped”. Music programs help keep the school district competitive and can help bring recognition to the school district.

Research on music and its effect on brain, tells that a human brain is more active when a person is playing music rather than just listening the music. Playing music activates several parts the brain, in fact this is the only activity which is seen to activate so many parts of the brain at the same time. Introduction of music in the early part of life brings more positive effects in the development of human brain via neuroplasticity. Learning music and high performance level in other activities like math, high test scores, etc. are also found to have positive correlation, but the reasons of such high performance level is still the subject of research.

### *Recommendations:*

Our first recommendation is that schools and school districts actively encourage and solicit parental and guardian participation in the school music programs. Parents can be great advocates for music programs. According to Dr. Sletto, school boards are more likely to listen to parents (as opposed to faculty) when it comes to feedback on program funding (Sletto, 2015).

One way to encourage parental involvement is through the creation of a music booster club. Booster clubs help the music department in many ways. Our survey responses show that many school districts already have some type of booster club. They can provide volunteers to help at music events or chaperone trips; they can help publicize upcoming events; they can also fundraise. Fundraising activities can be to help the department purchase music and equipment or can be used for school trips such as competitions. Indianola is an Iowa school district that has a music booster club. The following comes from the Indianola High School Music Department web site which demonstrates booster activities:

“Become a Patron of Indianola Music Boosters:

Indianola has a strong reputation of music education but we can't do it without your help. Music Boosters supports the Indianola School Music programs in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade. Each year we distribute money to the school district's music teachers to pay for sheet music, musical instruments, instrument repair, music computer programs, equipment and any other expense the music teacher believes is necessary to help his or her students develop their musical interest and talents.

Please consider helping the Indianola School music teachers develop that interest and talent by becoming an Indianola Music Patron and provide a well-rounded education for the students of Indianola.” (Indianola High School, 2014)

Another recommendation is for each one of us to be an advocate for music education. This can be done in several ways. You can contact your state representatives or your School Board members and let them know that you support music education. Support local music at some type of level, whether it is attending concerts at your children's school, or the Des Moines Symphony. Music directors can be proactive in spreading this message, perhaps by doing a presentation at a school board meeting.

For the struggling school that has to make hard choices how to maintain a well-rounded curriculum that includes music we think one of the solutions can be sharing music programs with nearby schools. For example, elementary and high school can share a music teacher and also they can share some of the instruments including the music books. A majority of us enjoy the music programs but none of us live in the perfect world and therefore we need to make the best of what we have. It is important to find different ways to give our children the opportunity to express themselves creatively to help them be better well balanced people in the future.

Our final recommendation is for schools to do everything they can to secure sources of “non-traditional” funding even if the music program isn't in current danger. Many schools have Music Booster clubs and parent and guardians to help fund these music programs. There are also many grant opportunities that are out there. For example, there are a lot of different foundations



that give funding to schools. The Mockingbird Foundation awards grants to schools and funds the music education of children. The VH1 Save the Music Foundation also helps support music education by providing new musical instruments. The Sharon Gewirtz Kids to Concerts Fund also offers grants to schools each year. There are a lot of sources of funding out there that educators should be aware of.

## **Appendix:**

### *Iowa Music Education Survey 2015*

Dear District Official,

As students in Drake University's Master of Public Administration program, one of our requirements is to complete a semester long research-based project. Our group is focusing on music education in Iowa schools, and therefore, we would appreciate it if you would take time to complete this short voluntary and confidential survey. We are researching the current status of music programs in Iowa schools.

If you are interested, we will be happy to share our completed final project with you in May. Please provide your email in the survey.

The survey link is provided below and please complete by Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup>:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MusicEducationIA2015>

Justine, Dina, Neerja, and Shari  
Drake University  
MPA Candidates

## Iowa Music Education Survey 2015

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, not be reported and remain anonymous.

Please complete by March 20th, 2015

### 1. School District Name (Optional, anonymous):

### 2. Is your district public or non-public?

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Non-public

### 3. County:

### 4. Total current student population:

### 5. In general, is your student population changing?

- ☐ Increasing
- ☐ Decreasing
- ☐ Stable

### 6. Does your school district have an Instrumental Music program in the current curriculum? If so, is it required?

	Yes	No	Required
Elementary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 7. How long has instrumental music been in the curriculum?

- ☐ None
- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 10 years
- ☐ Over 10 years

## Iowa Music Education Survey 2015

**8. If your instrumental music program is optional, what percentage of your student population participates?**

- ☐ Less than 10%  
☐ 10 to 25%  
☐ 26% to 50%  
☐ 51% to 75%  
☐ 76% to 100%  
☐ Not applicable

**9. Does your school district have any Vocal Music Programs in the current curriculum? If so, is it required?**

	Yes	No	Required
Elementary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. How long has the vocal music program been in the curriculum?**

- ☐ None  
☐ Less than 1 year  
☐ 1 to 10 years  
☐ Over 10 years

**11. If your Vocal Music program is optional, what percentage of your student population participates?**

- ☐ Less than 10%  
☐ 10 to 25%  
☐ 26% to 50%  
☐ 51% to 75%  
☐ 76% to 100%  
☐ Not applicable

**12. Does your school district have a Classroom Music program in the current Curriculum? If so, is it required?**

	Yes	No	Required
Elementary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Iowa Music Education Survey 2015

### 13. How long has classroom music been in the curriculum?

- ☐ None  
☐ Less than 1 year  
☐ 1 to 10 years  
☐ Over 10 years

### 14. If your Classroom Music program is optional, what percentage of your student population participates?

- ☐ Less than 10%  
☐ 10 to 25%  
☐ 26% to 50%  
☐ 51% to 75%  
☐ 76% to 100%  
☐ Not applicable

### 15. Have any of these programs been dropped from your district's curriculum?

- ☐ Not dropped  
☐ Less than 1 year ago  
☐ 1 to 10 years ago  
☐ Over 10 years ago

### 16. If yes, what are the reason(s) that the program(s) were dropped?

- ☐ Budget cuts or lack of funding  
☐ Lack of student participation  
☐ Lack of staff  
☐ The district is focusing on Common Core requirements  
☐ Other (please specify)

### 17. If yes, Which music programs were dropped?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Instrumental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Iowa Music Education Survey 2015**

**18. Were any of these programs proposed to be dropped but ended up being kept?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**19. If yes, what are the reason(s) that the program(s) were kept in your curriculum?**

☐ Parent/Guardian protest of the proposed cut

☐ Faculty protest of the proposed cut

☐ New/additional source of funding secured

☐ Other (please specify)

**20. Is your district using any "non-traditional" means of funding for music programs (examples include pay-to-play, grants, partnerships with local businesses or non-profits)**

☐ No

☐ Yes (please specify)

**21. Are there opportunities for parent/guardian participation in your music program such as a booster club?**

☐ No

☐ Yes (please specify)

**22. Other comments regarding your district's music program:**

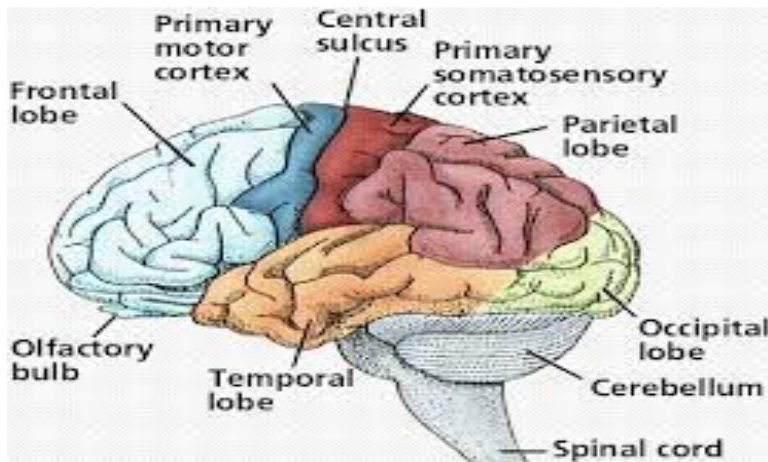
**23. Optional contact information for follow up or if you wish to receive our final results:**

Thank you very much for taking your time to fill out this survey

Neerja, Justine, Dina & Shari

Drake University MPA Graduate Students

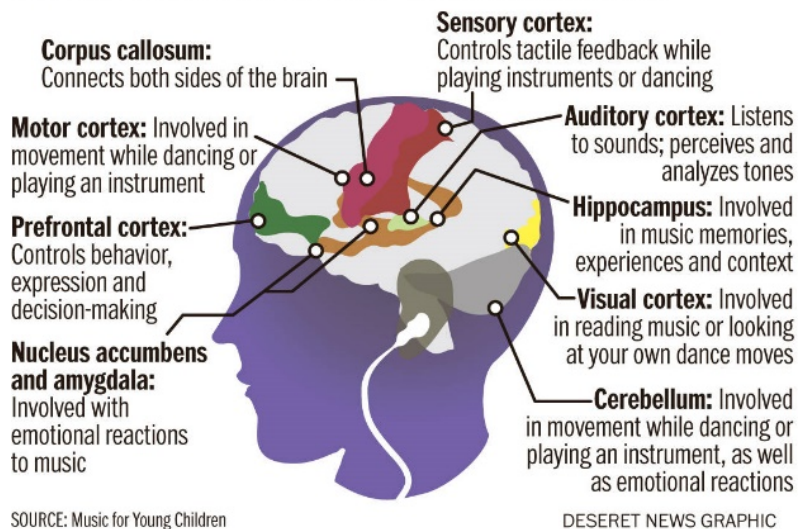
## Figures and Tables:



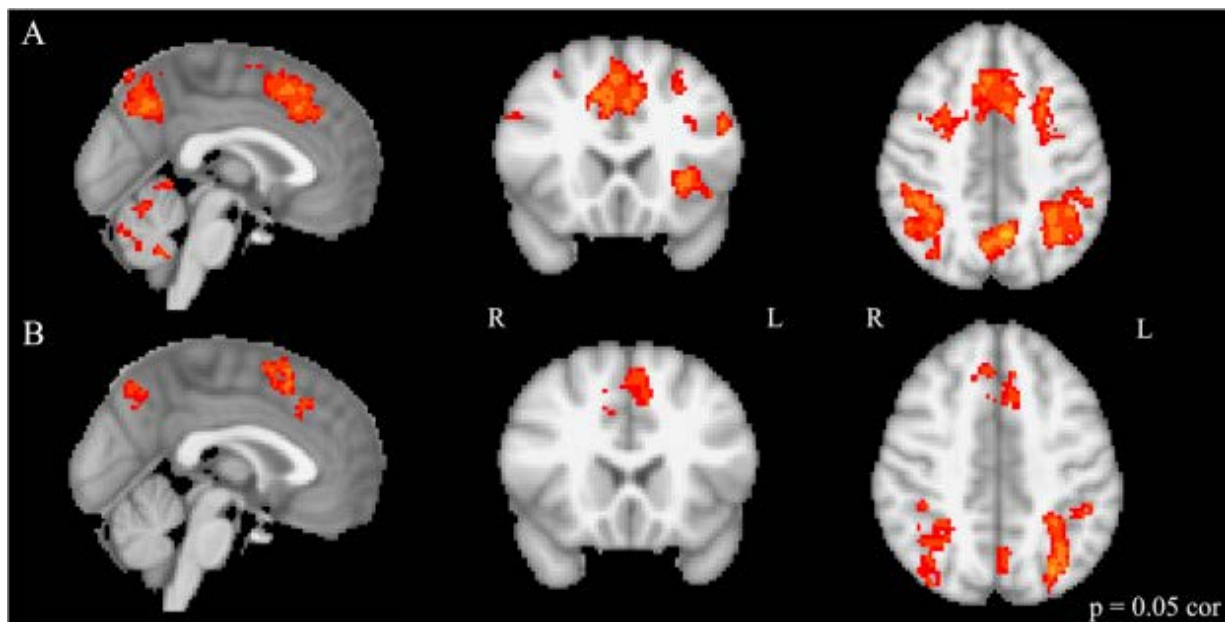
**Figure 1: Parts of the Brain (The Nervous System, 2001)**

## Music and the brain

*Playing and listening to music works several areas of the brain*

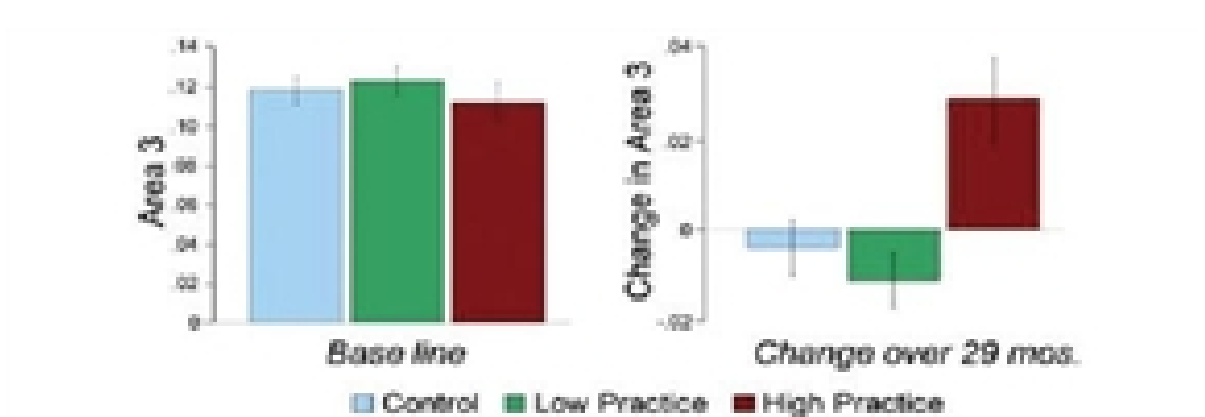


**Figure 2: Music and the Brain (Collins, 2014)**



**Figure 3: MRI Scans (Hicks, 2014)**

MRI scans showing brain activation during executive functioning testing. Row 'A', is of musically trained children. Row 'B', is of untrained children. There's more activation in the musically trained children.



**Figure 2.** Proportional size of area 3 at base line and absolute change in area 3 of the midsagittal CC (corrected for total brain volume) over 29 months, by group. [In color in *Annals* online.]

**Figure 4: Neuroplasty (Schlaug et. al, 2009)**



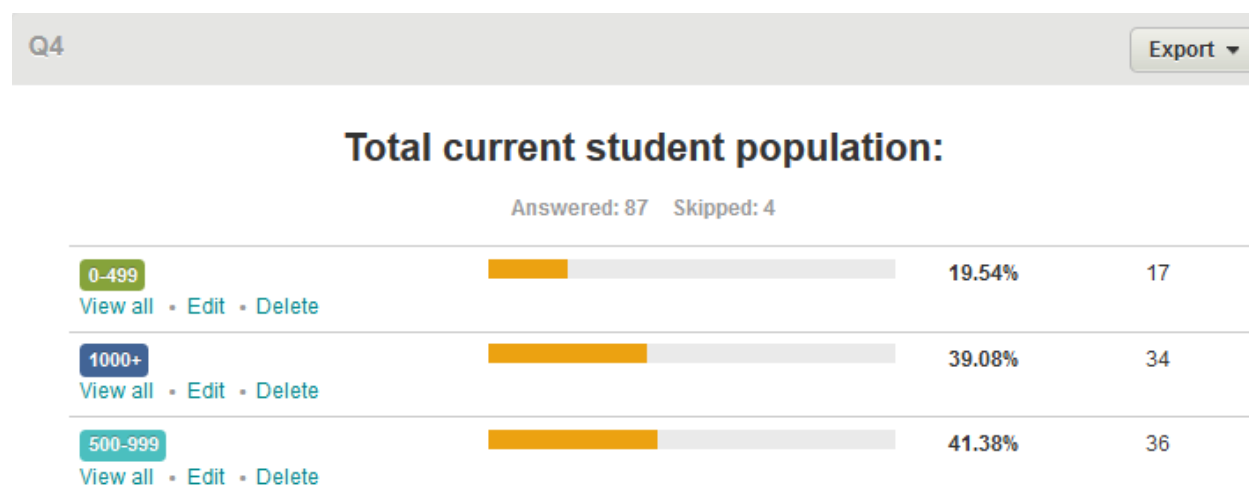


Figure 5 – Total current student population

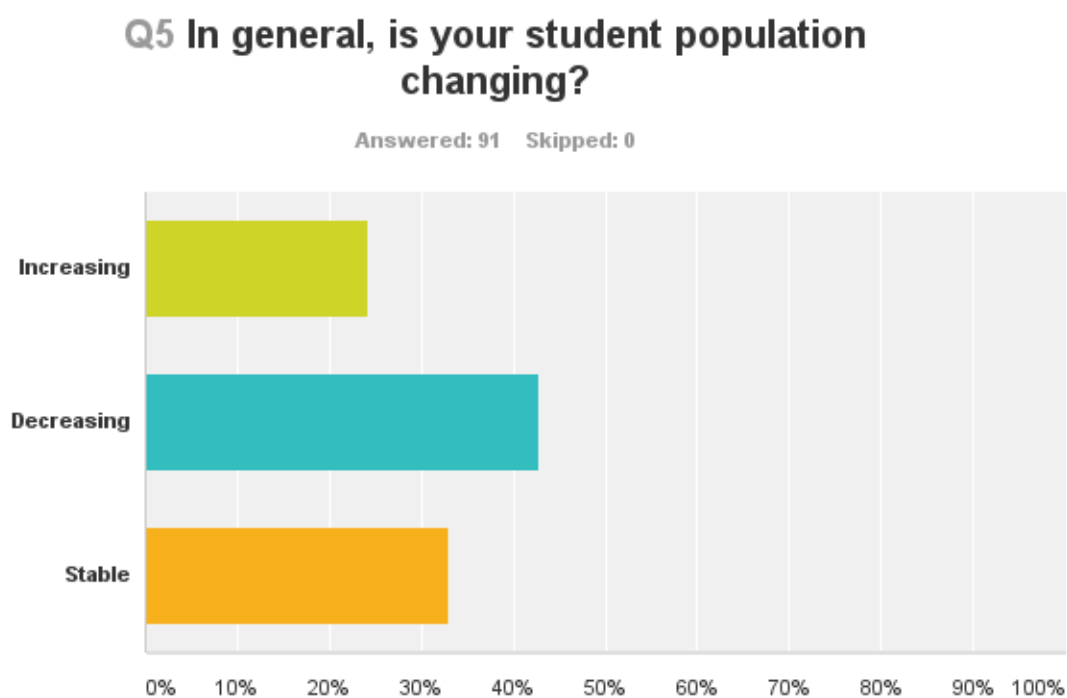
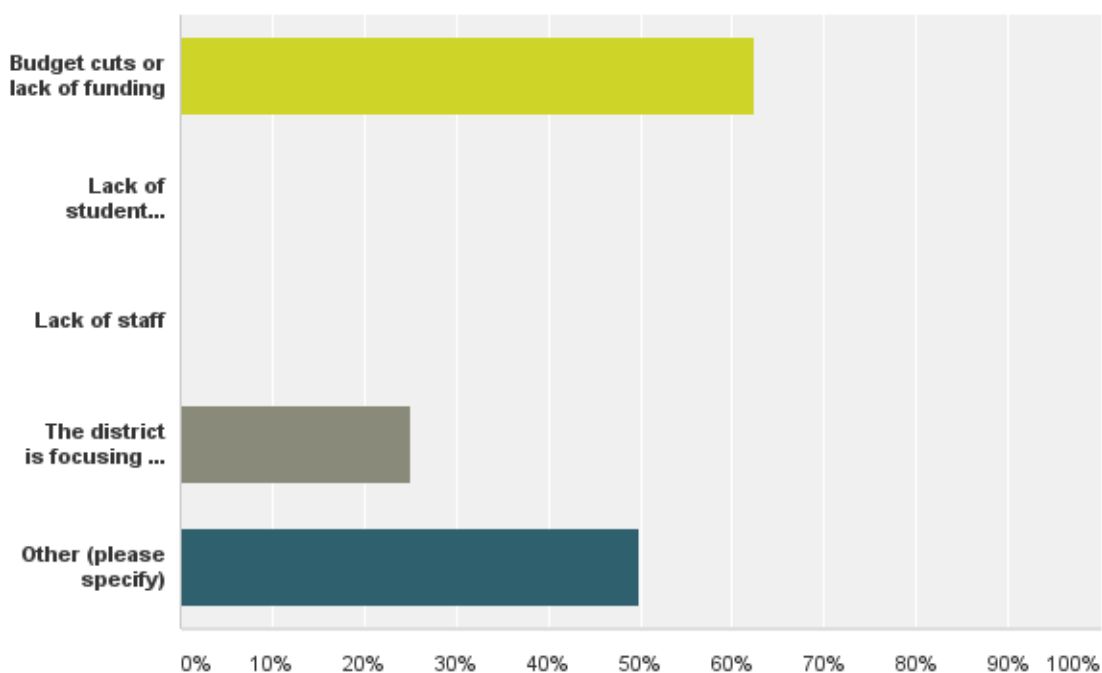


Figure 6 – Student population trend

### Q16 If yes, what are the reason(s) that the program(s) were dropped?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 83



Answer Choices	Responses
▼ Budget cuts or lack of funding	62.50% 5
▼ Lack of student participation	0.00% 0
▼ Lack of staff	0.00% 0
▼ The district is focusing on Common Core requirements	25.00% 2
▼ Other (please specify) <span>Responses</span>	50.00% 4
Total Respondents: 8	

Figure 7 – Reasons for dropping program

Q6					Customize	Export ▼
	Yes	No	Required	Total Respondents		
▼ Elementary School	77.91% 67	25.58% 22	12.79% 11	86		
▼ Middle School	97.78% 88	8.89% 8	6.67% 6	90		
▼ High School	97.75% 87	11.24% 10	2.25% 2	89		

**Table 1 – Instrumental programs**

Q9					Customize	Export ▼
	Yes	No	Required	Total Respondents		
▼ Elementary School	85.39% 76	7.87% 7	66.29% 59	89		
▼ Middle School	97.75% 87	8.99% 8	24.72% 22	89		
▼ High School	96.59% 85	11.36% 10	0.00% 0	88		

**Table 2 – Vocal programs**

Q12					Customize	Export ▼
▼	Yes ▼	No ▼	Required ▼	Total Respondents ▼		
▼ Elementary School	57.30% 51	37.08% 33	49.44% 44	89		
▼ Middle School	34.94% 29	68.67% 57	12.05% 10	83		
▼ High School	29.63% 24	77.78% 63	0.00% 0	81		

**Table 3 – Classroom programs**

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